

AMENDMENT

Amendments To The Specification

Kindly amend the specification as follows:

Page 9 lines 4-7:

Although cooling step 6 can be passive (e.g., in that the heat seals are simply allowed to cool by giving off heat to the ambient environment), it is preferably active in order to quickly cool the heat seals immediately after formation, so that the heat seal is not damaged or weakened by continued processing.[.]

Page 11 lines 4-15:

The one-stage process of the present invention eliminates the need to wind-up component films 12 and 13 after extrusion but before lamination, as well as the need for transporting and unwinding such intermediate products. The integrated process involves controlling the temperature of the component films during fabrication, thereby providing films that are not stressed during fabrication as in conventional two-stage processes. Preferably, the films are maintained at a temperature close to the fusing temperature of films, to minimize the stresses placed on the films. Minimizing temperature fluctuations yields laminate materials that are stronger and more durable than conventional packaging materials. The laminate materials made by the present methods are not inflated, which permits shipping an intermediate product [or] of relatively high density but which is ready for inflation at the location of the end-use, and this is more efficient than shipping a low density inflated product.

Page 16, lines 8-22:

FIG. 10 is a schematic of a particularly preferred apparatus and process (50) for carrying out the present invention. In FIG. 10, extruders 52 and 54 extrude first film 56 and second film 58, respectively. After extrusion, film 54 makes a partial wrap around heat transfer (cooling) roller 60, which preferably has a diameter of 8 inches and which is maintained at a surface temperature well beneath the fusion temperature of the extrudate, e.g., from 100-150°F. Second film [56] 58 makes partial wraps around each of heat transfer (cooling) rollers 62 and 64, each of which has a diameter of 8 inches and each of which is maintained at a surface temperature similar to that of cooling roller 60. After cooling, first film 56 makes a partial wrap (about 90 degrees) around Teflon[®] coated rubber nip roll 66, which has a diameter of 8 inches and which has, as its primary function, maintaining nip with heat transfer (heating) raised surface roll 70. While first film 56 is passing over nip roll 66, second film 58 merges with first film 56, with both films together being wrapped for a short distance around nip roll 66 before together entering first nip 68. Nip roller 66 provides a location of films 56 and 58 to come together without being marred or distorted.

Page 19 lines 17-23:

FIG. 11 is a diagrammatic view of an exemplary film manufacturing apparatus using a tubular stock of film to fabricate laminate material. Referring to FIG. 11, extruder [11] 34 comprises resin hopper 30, body 31, and die 32. Extruder [11] 34 can be any conventional extruder, including for example, single screw, double screw, and/or tandem extruders. In another embodiment, one or more extruders connected to die 32 co-extrude, as multilayer film or monolayer film, polymers having different properties or compositions.

direction of inflatable laminate article 20, with sealed portion 40 corresponding to a preferred raised surface pattern for raised surface roller 16 (FIG. 11) or 70 (FIG. 10). Unsealed portion 41 is also continuous along the machine direction of article 20, with unsealed portion 41 corresponding to a preferred recessed surface pattern (i.e., background pattern) of raised surface roller 16 and 70. Unsealed portion 41 is arranged to form a pattern that includes distinct air chambers (42), connecting channels (43), as well as leaving a skirt (i.e., film flaps) for use in inflating the inflatable article. Optionally, the unsealed portion could further include a passageway in the machine direction which serves as a manifold, i.e. connecting each of the passageways along an edge of the article. However, a skirt is preferred.